

Allied Plan Wins on Somme, According to British Generals

Effects Felt East and South, Officers Claim

Great Onslaught Not Intended to Break Through Lines in West, but Has Saved Verdun and Made Possible Russian and Italian Successes and Balkan Attack by Keeping Best Teuton Troops Occupied, Correspondent Is Told.

RIDICULE ENEMY'S CLAIM OF VICTORY

17,000,000 Shells Fired in First Five Weeks, British and French Lose 250,000 Men and Germans From 80,000 to 125,000, Balderston Estimates From Data Furnished Him by Headquarters Staff of English Army.

(By JOHN L. BALDERSTON.)

(Copyright, 1916, by The McClure Newspaper Syndicate.)

ON THE SOMME FRONT, Aug. 5.—After inspecting the positions on the Somme and discussing the situation with staff officers of the allied armies, I have gathered that the first phase of the offensive of 1916 is drawing toward a close. With the object of presenting a general view of the situation and of the results achieved in the tremendous battle as seen from this side, I have drawn the attention of generals and their assistants, wherever possible, to the widespread German claims that the allies have failed and that the German armies, by preventing a "break-through" here, have won a great victory.

Has the allied attack failed? If it has, if no important results have been or will be achieved on the Somme, the failure of General Sir Henry Rawlinson and General Foch, in whose hands, under the supervision of Generals Haig and Joffre, the campaign has rested, is almost without precedent in this war. For the effort made has been tremendous, dwarfing every other allied attack of the war, eclipsing even the German onslaught upon Verdun. And the price in blood has been appalling—in the first six weeks of the attack not less than a quarter of a million Britons and Frenchmen were shot down, and the nature of the battle makes it certain that the German loss must be very much smaller.

After the first week or two of elation in London and Paris, when the capture of most of the German first and second line trench systems over a wide front was announced, and the severity of the losses incurred in the attacks was not yet known, a feeling of disappointment, which in some quarters has changed into outright pessimism, the Germans, using their publicity department skillfully, as always, have spread in England as well as among neutral countries the impression that their front is unshaken and unshakable.

All Are Smiling.
Let it be recorded then, first, that there is no pessimism at the front. From Tommy to commander-in-chief everybody is smiling and keeping his head up. The soldier at the front was disgusted beyond words in July when he read the cackling about victory in his home newspapers, for he knew what he was up against and knew that no victory on this front was to be expected this summer. He is no less disgusted now when he reads between the lines in the paper, or openly stated in letters from home, doubts and misgivings. "It is no use, no use trying to make civilians understand anything," wailed a general in his headquarters. "They think we've been licked, though we told them before this show started what we were going to do, and we're doing it."

As is the case with all attacks, this "big push" has failed to do all that was hoped. Part of the German lines that by the original plan were to have been taken in the first rush are still holding out. On the other hand, some German strongholds, such as Pozieres, were taken weeks before

When I spent some time on this front several weeks before the Somme offensive began, at a time of comparative quiet, I learned enough about the preparations to form a pretty good idea of what the British were about to attempt, and since then staff officers have explained, with the aid of their maps and their wonderful relief models in clay of the whole countryside, their views of the campaign. Unfortunately, I am unable to quote these men at length, for the campaign is not over and the things they talked about cannot all be discussed in public as yet.

Only Generalities.
But I have received permission, provided I keep to generalities, to give the point of view of the British army regarding the present campaign, and to show why, as far as it has gone, it has accomplished what was expected of it, despite the great losses suffered, the great number of shells fired, and the comparatively small amount of territory captured. This, speaking roughly, can hardly be less than 250,000 for the British and French, as against from one-third to one-half that number for the Germans, based on official figures for two weeks of fighting, an estimate that the British and French have fired 12,000,000 shells since July 1 was made by a headquarters officer, who thinks that the Germans have sent over about 5,000,000 projectiles in reply. The allies have to show in return for this terrible sea of blood poured out and for the depletion of their shell supplies, and in fifty square miles of ground, including, it is true, whole trench systems constructed with the greatest skill, but containing not a single spot of great strategic importance. It is indeed not to be wondered at that the Germans have succeeded in persuading the world that the allies have suffered a great defeat in view of these facts.

The observer who seeks to discern the truth about the Somme offensive must not keep his eyes glued on the scene of fighting in Picardy. The German trick, in discussing this battle, is to consider it as though it stood by itself and had no relation to other theaters of war. At British headquarters it is claimed that the attack, which began on July 1 and still continues, has had the following results:

It has saved Verdun, which was on the last legs as of June, and could not have held out much longer had not the great drive of Rawlinson and Foch forced General Von Falkenhayn to transfer troops from the Meuse to the Somme.

Helped the Italians.
It has helped the Italians in their Isongo campaign, making possible the taking of Gorizia. German troops which had been promised the harassed Austrians on the eastern front could not be sent there, and the German attack, and, in fact, some troops were instead taken from the eastern front to the Somme. I have talked to a prisoner who in four months had fought at Verdun, before Kovol, and in Pozieres. This defection of their allies compelled the Austrians to move troops from the Isongo front to stop the Austrian drive on Lemberg, and the chance of the Italians came, to be promptly taken advantage of by General Cadorna.

It has made possible the later success of the Russian offensive in Volhynia and Galicia. A careful study of the stages of the Russian attack will make this quite clear. When Brusiloff's breakthrough at Lutsk threatened the whole Austro-German position in the east, the Germans rushed troops to save the all-important railway junction of Kovol and commenced a counter-offensive which pressed the Russians back for many miles and seemed most threatening in the last days of June. The allied attack on the Somme forced the German high command to stop sending troops to the east, and in recent weeks some have even been transferred here from the Kovol front. More important still, it compelled the Germans to use here the great stores of shells and new guns which they had planned, after taking Verdun, to move against the Russians. It is certain that the Russians owe to the Somme offensive their ability to keep going again in July and inflict heavy defeats on the Austrians; it is very probable that the Somme offensive prevented a German offensive in Russia, which might conceivably have had disastrous results for the armies of the czar.

Attack Not Failure.
I do not believe the allied attack has failed. The Germans have succeeded in creating this impression by cleverly claiming at the beginning that the attack was intended to gain certain impossible objectives, and then when such towns as Bapaume and St. Quentin remained inviolate loudly calling attention to the fact that the efforts to take them had not succeeded—efforts which, as a matter of fact, were never made.

and has alone made it possible for England at least to bring her full power into play. But they believe—and they let you see that they believe—that the great strategic plan Lord Kitchener and General Joffre formed two years ago will bear fruit next year, or in 1918 at the latest; that the enormous reserves of England will turn the scale and win final victory over the Germans, no matter how exhausted the other allies may find themselves in the closing stages of this terrible war of attrition.

Having set down the great effects produced by the Somme offensive in all the theaters of war, it would seem puerile to examine minutely the small territorial changes resulting on this front from the great clash here. I have examined the scene of the great struggle in the world from hills in the rear and been in the first line trenches during a heavy bombardment; I have seen the tremendous incredible concentration of cannon in the rear of the allied lines, extending back for miles until the zone of the heaviest hitters and nearest the front reached. It would be possible to describe at length the terrain, but this has already been done, and to record my impressions of the great battle would be to describe the indescribable, to add another failure to the long list of failures to make people realize what things are like that are unrealizable under any conditions that have actually been in them.

Slowly Go Forward.
The British have the German first line positions at Thiepval partly surrounded and are winning a few yards day by day northwest of Pozieres, so that the capture of Thiepval works by this flanking movement within a few weeks, I am told, assured. The Germans are only holding out there to inflict the greatest possible loss before yielding. The superior weight of fire on the allied side is such that the capture of the whole position along the ridge running above Pozieres, through the High Wood, to Comblanchien seems assured before the end of the summer. But the reader must realize that these details of ground are comparatively unimportant. Whether Comblanchien or Peronne are taken or are not taken depends on how much the allies are willing to pay for them, how much the Germans ask.

The layman who would understand the battle of the Somme, a distinguished officer told me, "must divest himself of the notion that we are trying to break the German line and win a decisive victory. Of course we'd like to do that if we could, but this year it is impossible, and since we knew that when we got ready for this offensive, we were trying to do something else."

"It seems impossible," I said, "to get people to think of battles otherwise than in terms of ground gained and men and guns captured."

"Yes," he said, "that explains these claims the Germans are putting out that they have got us stopped. Of course they have. We have bitten out a few chunks but we are stopped, and have been stopped for two years, and may remain stopped—I won't finish that sentence. My point is that the German staff knows as well as we do what we are trying to do, and that we are doing it, and that when they tell neutrals that we are stopped, that we are unable to take Bapaume, that our plan to break through and turn to the north and roll the German armies into the sea has failed, they are talking nonsense, and know they are talking nonsense. The unfortunate thing is that the neutrals do make an impression on people who understand nothing of strategy or tactics."

"Don't you tell me for the information of the American public," I asked, "just how we should regard the battle of the Somme in order to understand what is going on?"

"No simple thing," he answered, "so simple that people overlook the truth in seeking complicated solutions of the problem. When the Germans attacked Verdun they missed their divisions, including most of their best troops, against our front. They figured that political pressure, the outcry for help from the French, would compel us to attack at the beginning of March. These 650,000 crack fighters, with the result that our armies would be beaten and not worth much for the rest of the year. We were not ready then, and they knew it. So we did not attack, but we set ourselves at once to prepare this attack on the Somme in conjunction with the French."

Crucial on Everything.
"Our plan, which succeeded perfectly, was to induce the Germans to commit themselves as thoroughly as possible at Verdun. It was a cruel plan, cruelly hard on the French army and the French people, so cruel that the Germans did not think the French could stand it. It involved holding Verdun to the last possible moment while we prepared our great blow—we were willing to give up the Meuse line if necessary rather than strike prematurely—but the moral effect have been very great, and the tactical situation over there would have been altered very much to our advantage if the crown prince had succeeded. So after Fleury was lost in June and the end seemed in sight, July 1 was set for our great attack to make sure that Verdun should be saved."

"Of course Verdun was not the only issue at stake. Our offensive here also took into consideration the Russian attack which succeeded as

brilliantly, and which had been planned at Paris late in the winter. The great results achieved by Brusiloff took us all, allies and enemies alike, somewhat by surprise, and we knew early in June, when the danger at Verdun began to grow, that Germany was hastening things there in order to rush men and guns to the east and deal a terrible counter-blow that should break the Russian lines as soon as possible after Verdun had fallen. It was our job to prevent that. The date we chose, July 1, gave the Germans time to transfer some men and guns to the east which they had to bring back against us, and to that extent embarrassed them more than if they had brought them from Verdun straight here.

Weakened Other Fronts.
"There is one most important point I must make. I have said that this battle is not an attempt to break the German line. That is true, but only because we know that the Germans will not allow us to break it as long as they can help it, and we know from many sources that they can help it this year. Now this move of ours was like a check in chess, which compels the defending player to do something to protect his king. We attacked, threatening if we were not prevented to break through the German lines and win the war in one blow. We thereby compelled the Germans to move up enough men and guns to make it certain that we should not succeed in this, and the harder we attacked the more defensive effort we should compel them to put forth, to the prejudice of their other fronts. When a chess player, whose ultimate object is to checkmate his adversary, moves a piece against the king and in so doing to make his position less favorable, it is correct for the man who attacked to say he is not trying to checkmate, but is moving only with the object of making an eventual checkmate, perhaps in distant future. Just so is it correct for us to say that we are not trying to break the line when we make a move that would break the line unless the enemy, in his disadvantage elsewhere, defends himself here. To return to the chess game, it would not be correct for the man whose king was attacked and who had to weaken his position to defend his king, to claim a success because his opponent did not then get the king. Nor can the Germans accurately claim success because we forced them to give up cherished projects and suffer defeat elsewhere, where to protect their front against us, even though we have not broken through them, not yet. In chess as in war, it is the end of the game that counts."

The dominant note of the battle of the Somme, the thing that makes it stand out from all other battles, even

Verdun, is the volume of artillery fire. I have already said that perhaps 17,000,000 shells have already been fired by both sides over a front of about twenty miles. This figure is difficult to realize. What it means in practice is this:

Wide Destruction.
For ten miles behind the front line trenches of either side, in a zone twenty miles in depth, from beyond Bapaume on the German side, to beyond (deleted by censor) on the British, shells are striking day and night. A storm of iron, literally, is raging over that devoted district all the time, turning towns and villages into battered and blazing ruins. Of course it is within the central six miles of this twenty-mile area of death that the destruction is greatest, for here the bullets and smaller shell fly, as well as most of the big ones.

Nearly all of the 1,500,000 men or so engaged in this battle are within the twenty-mile zone, and thus liable to be hit, and yet most of them feel perfectly safe when they are withdrawn from the trenches. But the great guns on both sides regularly shell towns and villages and road junctions as far behind the lines as ten miles; Bapaume, to mention one example, is seven miles from the heaviest British ordnance, if the reports of aerial observation are correct. The same treatment to a greater or less degree is meted out to all places within range where troops are supposed to be billeted. Often there are no troops there, and the only victims are poor civilians, whose fate is a pitiable one, whether they are under fire of their friends or their enemies.

EXCELSIOR SPRINGS
The National Health and Recreation Resort.
Famous Mineral Waters prescribed by physicians. Completely equipped baths—experienced Masseurs.
HOTEL SNAPP
Excelsior Springs finest hotel. First class in every respect. American plan, cuisine unsurpassed. Quiet, elegant, restful. Beautiful surroundings. Motoring, Golfing, Dancing, Re-creation. Free Booklet and Views. Address The Manager.



WITH THE FALL SEASON, AND ITS attendant gayety almost upon us, it is high time to think about the wardrobe—To go through it—Deciding what needs replacing and which of the garments that will do nicely after Dry-Cleaning.

Why not see about it now, and have it over with before the usual fall rush begins—And save the expense of buying New Fall Clothing at this time.

You may send us in perfect safety the most delicate article of wearing apparel or the heaviest blankets, and they will be returned to you promptly looking the equal of New—Each piece you send us receives the attention of workmen skilled in that particular line—Thus you get the best efforts of Dry-Cleaning Specialists at all times.

In our Hat Department we clean and block Gentlemen's Hats and make New Soft Hats to order.

314 S. Cincinnati **BOHNEFELD** Phones 1210-1211
CLEANING AND HAT WORKS
JUST NORTH OF Y. M. C. A.

The Living Voice—

The exclusive processes controlled by the Columbia recording laboratories give you the only true, vivid, full, actually living reproduction of some of the greatest voices in the world.

You hear Fremstad, Garden, Matzenauer, Nielsen, Constantino, Slezak, Mardones, Zenatello, Seagle, Graveure and a score of other great singers themselves in their Columbia Double-Disc Records—their voice, their genius, their very personality. You'll recognize the singers as surely as though they stood before you in person in these splendid reproductions of the living voice. Listen to any one of these records on the Columbia Grafonola, and you'll almost feel convinced that it isn't a record, but pure reality.



COLUMBIA
GRAFONOLA
PRICE \$150

EASY TERMS IF DESIRED

Darrow Music Co.

EXCLUSIVE AGENTS

109-111 East Third St. Phone 616



FOR ALL AGES

SPECIAL
REFRESHING PURE NUTRITIOUS

Farmers & Merchants Produce Co., Distributors.